



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Got a life-science company? Kalamazoo is ready for it

Friday, October 26, 2007

Emiliem Inc. could have set up its new research and development shop anywhere.

The California-based drug-development company certainly had hundreds of places in other states and even other countries where it could have set up an R&D operation to develop and bring to market specialized cancer treatments.

It chose Kalamazoo – and the reason why is because Kalamazoo was ready for Emiliem.

The company had an interest in Michigan, a state that is working to reinvent itself as a science and technology hub, because it already was collaborating with Wayne State University in Detroit and the Van Andel Institute in Grand Rapids.

The company also contracts with Kalexsyn Inc., a biotech company that got its start at the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center at Western Michigan University's Business Technology and Research Park. Kalexsyn, by the way, is preparing to move to a new 20,000-square-foot lab in the park.

But it was the Innovation Center itself that helped Emiliem decide to choose Kalamazoo.

"We explored all over the state and found that the Kalamazoo site was the best of them all," said Emiliem CEO and President Dale Johnson. "The Innovation Center is much farther along than at any of those other places."

That's because Southwest Michigan First, the area's private economic development organization, was quick to come up with the concept of an incubator for life-science startups. The concept was a creative response to the anticipated loss of scientific jobs after Pfizer Inc. acquired Pharmacia Corp.

Southwest Michigan First suspected that a number of those laid-off scientists would be happy to stay in Kalamazoo – if there were jobs for them. So the organization found a way to help former Pfizer scientists create their own jobs here.

It's a model that others would like to emulate.

When Pfizer announced it was moving its entire R&D operations out of Ann Arbor, economic developers there looked to Kalamazoo to see what could be replicated.

A key piece in that "stick-around" strategy was the Innovation Center, established in 2003, which, with Emiliem's announcement, is now home to 11 life-science companies. It provides subsidized rental space for fledgling companies, which allows them to reinvest more of their revenues in their businesses.

Among the factors that attracted Emiliem's attention to this area, its CEO said, was that this area has a wealth of pharmaceutical scientists ready to work.

No doubt many of those scientists are still here because of the work of Southwest Michigan First.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

R&D drug company to locate here

Life sciences
incubator attracts
West Coast firm

BY ALEX NIXON
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KALAMAZOO — Drawn by a talent pool, local connections and startup services, a West Coast drug-development firm has joined the mix at Kalamazoo's life-sciences incubator.

Emiliem Inc., based in Emeryville, Calif., is setting up a research-and-development operation at the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center, where it plans to employ former Pfizer Inc. scientists to help it discover and bring to market specialized cancer treatments.

"It's really quite an unusual situation where you can access that kind of talent," Dale Johnson, president and chief execu-

tive officer of Emiliem, said of laid-off Pfizer workers in Michigan, whom he said he's interviewing for research positions with his company.

Pfizer announced in January that it would close its Ann Arbor R&D operations, laying off about 2,100 workers. About 250 in Kalamazoo will lose their jobs next year as part of Pfizer's restructuring.

Emiliem expects to hire about 10 new employees in the next one to two years, Johnson said.

Johnson, who scouted sites not only in Michigan but also in other states and countries, said the incubator in Western Michigan University's Business Technology and Research Park sealed the deal for his small but growing company.

"We explored all over the state and found that the Kalamazoo site was the best of all of them," he said.

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R&D drug company to locate here

"The innovation center is much farther along than at any of those other places," he said of other Michigan incubators.

"We recognized that this company, with their connections, could have gone anywhere."

The company focused on Michigan because it has drug-development collaborations with scientists at Wayne State University and at the Van Andel Institute, a Grand Rapids cancer-research facility. It also contracts work with Innovation Center tenant Kalexsyn Inc., which is preparing to relocate into a new 20,000-square-foot laboratory in the business park next month.

SANDRA COCHRANE
Chief operating officer, WMU's Business Technology and Research Park

With Emiliem, the Innovation Center now has 11 tenant companies and is about 85 percent occupied, said Sandra Cochran, chief operating officer of the incubator.

Cochran said the center, she said, which has developed a strong network that supports startup firms, is lucky to have Emiliem. "We recognized that this company, with their connections, could have gone anywhere," she said.

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California biotech co. moves to Kalamazoo

Posted by Mark Sanchez October 25, 2007 07:00AM

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A California biotech company moved its research-and-development operations to Kalamazoo to tap the region's expertise in drug development.

Emiliem Inc., which is developing a pipeline of cancer drugs, expects to hire 10 or so R&D employees in the area over the next two years.

Executives will split their time between California and Michigan.

The company is at the point where it needs to establish a core R&D center, Emiliem President and CEO Dale Johnson said. Doing so required space, infrastructure, access to capital and an experienced talent pool that the Kalamazoo area offers.

Most of the company's business partners are in Michigan and Wisconsin, so "we view Kalamazoo, because of its history in the drug development business, as an ideal place to establish our center and start to grow this new part of the business," Johnson said.

He was also drawn by the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship program.

The privately held Emiliem moved to the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center in Western Michigan University's Business Technology and Research Park.

Emilien's move to Kalamazoo "shows just how intricate our life-science web is becoming" in western Michigan, Southwest Michigan First CEO Ron Kitchens said. "When a biotechnology company developing oncology drug products relocates to Kalamazoo from California, you know you are doing something right," Kitchens said.

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